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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version  
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Oliveira, L. d. F. R. d., Nascimento, E. G. C. d., Júnior, J. M. P., Cavalcanti, M. A. F., Miranda, F. A. N. d., & Alchiere, J. C. (2015). Use of male condom in adolescents. *Revista de Pesquisa: Cuidado é Fundamental Online*, 7(1), 1765-1773. <https://doi.org/10.9789/2175-5361.2015.v7i1.1765-1773>

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# Journal of Research Fundamental Care Online

ISSN 2175-5361  
DOI: 10.9789/2175-5361

## RESEARCH

### Adesão de adolescentes à camisinha masculina

Use of male condom in adolescents

Uso del preservativo masculino en adolescentes

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#### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to know the sexual behavior of adolescents of high school about the use of male condoms in the city of Pau do Ferros-RN. **Method:** this is a quantitative approach, descriptive and exploratory type. **Results:** it was found that adolescents start sexual activity increasingly earlier with a significant difference in the type of partner about gender, using condom is still lower than expected, moreover, it draws attention the reasons that lead or not to use a condom. **Conclusion:** studies on healthy sexual behavior among adolescents, with an emphasis on protection against STDs, considering gender differences are still needed. **Descriptors:** Adolescent, Sexual behavior, Sexually transmitted diseases.

#### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Conhecer o comportamento sexual dos adolescentes do Ensino Médio quanto ao uso do preservativo masculino no município de Pau dos Ferros-RN. **Método:** estudo do tipo descritivo-exploratório de abordagem quantitativa. **Resultados:** os adolescentes iniciam sua atividade sexual cada vez mais cedo com uma diferença expressiva quanto ao tipo de parceiro em razão de sexo, e a adesão ao preservativo ainda é inferior ao esperado, além disso, chama atenção os motivos que os levam a usar ou não o preservativo. **Conclusão:** estudos sobre comportamentos sexuais saudáveis entre os adolescentes, com ênfase na proteção contra DSTs, considerando as diferenças de gênero, são ainda necessários. **Descritores:** Adolescente, Comportamento sexual, Doenças sexualmente transmissíveis.

#### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Este estudio tuvo como objetivo evaluar el comportamiento sexual de los adolescentes de la educación secundaria sobre el uso de preservativos en la ciudad de Pau dos Ferros-RN. **Método:** Estudio de enfoque cuantitativo del tipo descriptivo y exploratorio. **Resultados:** Se encontró que los adolescentes inician la actividad sexual cada vez más temprana, con una diferencia significativa en el tipo de pareja sexual, el uso del preservativo sigue siendo inferior a lo previsto, por otra parte, llama la atención sobre las razones que llevan o no a usar un preservativo. **Conclusión:** aún se necesitan estudios sobre el comportamiento sexual saludable entre los adolescentes, con énfasis en la protección contra enfermedades de transmisión sexual, teniendo en cuenta las diferencias de género. **Descriptor:** Adolescentes, Comportamiento sexual, Enfermedad y transmisión sexual.

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## INTRODUCTION

**A**dolescents represent a vulnerable group to the risk of infection from HIV and other STDs. On one hand, they begin sexual life at increasingly earlier ages, eager for new experiences and adventures. On the other hand, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is still resistance of society to the implementation of projects and programs focused on issues of sexuality and reproduction in that stage.<sup>1-2</sup> Given them knowledge and above all encourage them to adopt safe behaviors in their sexual relations, is a challenge for education and health.

Studies confirm the increasing number of people with AIDS among adolescents in recent years, corroborating the need for knowing the behavior of this group so that they can plan for integrated actions between health and education aiming to intervene in this reality.<sup>3</sup>

The concept of adolescence, more widely spread, is characterised as the transition between childhood and adulthood phase. For the World Health Organization (WHO) and also adopted in Brazil by the Ministry of Health, adolescence is limited to the period of the life of every human being from 10 to 19 years old, having as a fundamental characteristic the transformations in biological, psychological and social areas.<sup>4</sup>

It is worth mentioning the constancy in limiting the definition of adolescence to biological transformations, called puberty, highlighting that adolescence and puberty cannot be understood as synonyms. Puberty is only one aspect of this phase and refers to the process of organic development and body, characterised primarily by hormonal changes that accelerate the physical growth and to the development of male and female secondary sexual characters.<sup>2,5</sup>

Adolescents find themselves faced with a huge range of possibilities and options, beyond the curious to explore and experience everything around them, expanding their universe of relationships beyond the family, mainly closer to groups with whom they identify with.<sup>6</sup> Group involvement has a transcendental importance, because of the dependency that before they have with family, especially with parents, transferring it to this new group, constituting the necessary transition in the outside world to reach adult individualization.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, it is with the participants of this new group, that the adolescents will have new discoveries and build new experiences, sharing and experiencing their questions and concerns, including about sexuality. The sexuality as an activity inherent in the human being, is built from their experiences, the interaction with the environment and culture and it is therefore, a socio-cultural phenomenon. In this way, the way it is experienced today, reflects the changes of behavioral patterns over the years.<sup>7-8</sup>

The influence of the media is added on this subject, in particular television, the way it addresses the often thematic out of reality, always full of charms, practically not showing the consequences of unprotected sex, always associating sex just to pleasure, even when it occurs in an unreasonable way, i.e. the information by the TV are commonly misleading, making everything seem simple and natural.<sup>3-4</sup>

Adolescents receive information about sex from many sources, most of the time incomplete information, which makes their sexual manifestations a condition of risk and vulnerability. It is presumed that the distancing of the family, plus the influence of media and erroneous information absorption may interfere negatively in the healthy development of sexuality. This is associated with the increasingly earlier initiation of sexual activity among adolescents, by their condition of immaturity to discern on some choices at that stage that can assume a definitive character.<sup>9</sup>

Generally it is associated with adolescence dating phase, which also receives the influence of transformations of the contemporary society, understood as a social affective, constant and lasting relationship. In a ritualistic perspective, previously, this began with a series of steps and represented the possibility of a more intimate approach between the couple, currently no uncommon the option for another type of relationship, popularly known as "hooking up". This new rearrangement in adolescence finishes a relationship marked by the absence of compromise, characterized by an attraction or interest which results in physical contact, and may be restricted to a date, days or become continuous and repetitive, culminating in a dating.<sup>2,4</sup>

In this context of novelty, curiosity and experimentation of life in which adolescents are inserted, HIV emerges as a real threat, not just to young people, but they have gained prominence due to rising tide of girlishness in the AIDS pandemic that has taken place, possibly by the feeling of omnipotence characteristic of adolescence, translated by the sense of immunity, making him defy the rules showing risky experimentation behaviors, disregarding the dangers they are exposed.<sup>7</sup>

In another way, information about sexually transmitted infections and measures of protection enable adolescents the experience of sex in a healthy way, ensuring them to get the prevention of STDs/Aids and unwanted pregnancy. It is considered as fundamental knowledge about contraception, particularly condoms, only method that offers dual protection, paradoxically, being aware and stopping information is not guaranteed to put them into practice.<sup>10</sup>

In a context marked by social networks and the mass communication, there is the establishment of media strategies capable of stimulating changes in the behavior of adolescents taking stopping all the knowledge they have. Thus, educational practices are essential to the orientation and reflection about their sexuality, giving them conditions and support so that they become active subjects of their sexual and reproductive life, adopting a posture of prevention and health promotion, since issues related to sexuality create strong social impact situations.<sup>5-8</sup> Through this context, it wonders: what is the behavior of adolescents about male condom use? Thus, the objective is: to know the sexual behavior of adolescents in high school about the use of the male condom.



## METHOD

Quantitative study of descriptive-exploratory type held in the city of Pau dos Ferros/RN - Brazil, which has a population of 28,197 inhabitants and an area of approximately 260 km<sup>2</sup>. The city of Pau dos Ferros is highlighted for being one of the largest economic and educational centers of the interior of Brazil, developing activities mainly in trade and being headquarter of three institutions of higher education as well as of the 15<sup>th</sup> Regional Board of Education and Culture (DIREC) responsible for 20 municipalities, facts that help to justify the large flow of people daily, from municipalities of western Brazil and other municipalities of the States of Ceará and Paraíba.

The selection of the sample was randomly, voluntary participation and the adolescents from 15 to 18 years old, authorized by parents because of the vulnerability of the group. Inclusion criteria were: being 15 to 19 years old authorized officially by their parents; be regularly enrolled in school; attend a regular high school; reside in the city of Pau dos Ferros. Then, the research proposal involved four schools, two private and two state schools.

The data collection was held by a questionnaire with questions about the use of male condom in adolescents, tabulated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0, presented and discussed in graphs and tables through simple statistics in percentage terms. The research project was submitted and approved on May 4, 2012, with the CAAE nº 0145.0.248.000-11 by the Ethic Committee in Research (CEP) of the Universidade do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte (UERN).

## RESULTS E DISCUSSION

Se comparado por razão de sexo à iniciação sexual para o sexo feminino ocorre frequentemente com o namorado, enquanto que para o sexo masculino a iniciação acontece na maioria das vezes com amigas. Observa-se que no grupo estudado o sexo feminino não elencou a categoria de recém-conhecido ao contrário do sexo masculino (Tabela 1).

The questionnaires were filled out by 379 students, which represented a percentage of 27% of the total number of students enrolled in high school for schools of the municipality of Pau dos Ferros in the year 2012. As for the gender of the participants 54% were female, with an average age of 16.47, on 16.34 -16.60 confidence interval. 50.4% of the participants of the survey claimed the sex life initiation. When considering the age of sexual life initiation, there was an average of 14.7 years old, besides this sexual initiation took place for most of the participants with their boyfriend (47.6%), friend (36.1%) and just met people (5.2%). If the gender is compared, the sexual initiation for the female occurs frequently

with her boyfriend, while for males the initiation happens most often with friends. It is observed that in the group studied, the female did not present the just known person category, different from male (Table 1).

**Table 1** - Type of relationship with the first sexual partner of adolescents, student of High school from the city of Pau dos Ferros- RN, by gender.

Sexual initiation	Female	Male
Friend	15,2%	50,9%
Boyfriend/Girlfriend	70,9%	31,3
Spouse/Partner	3,8%	-
Just knwon person	-	8,9%
Finacè	2,5%	0,0
Other	7,6%	8,0%

As for the knowledge about methods to prevent STDs, in the first sexual intercourse, the results showed that 92.1% stated positively, while at the last intercourse, 99.5% of the participants claimed to know this information.

In the use of condoms at first sex intercourse, 65.4% claimed its use, 33.4% responded “No” and 1.2% claim not to remember. It is observed that the use is more consistent in female with 72.2% of the interviewed. The values of condom use at the last intercourse are similar to the first intercourse, being that there are a discrete increase regarding the use, 68.1% of the respondents.

Regarding the use of condoms in the first and last intercourse, it was observed that 65.4% of adolescents who claimed to use the condom at the first sex intercourse, 22.2% have not used it in the last intercourse and 77.8% used it in the first and the last intercourse. Already the 33.4% who didn't use in the first, 48.4% used in the last relationship while 50% have not used in two moments, others claim not to remember. So, when asked about the motives of the unprotected sex by condom use, said he did not expect to have sexual intercourse. This fact, common in males when referring to the first relationship (Table 2).

**Table 2-** Reasons claimed by the adolescents from the High School of the city of Pau dos Ferros- RN not using male condom in the last sex intercourse, by gender.

Reasons claimed by the Adolescents	First sex intercourse		Last sex intercourse	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Did not expected to have sex intercourse	13,9%	25,9%	13,9%	11,6%
Does not like to use it	5,1%	3,6%	3,8%	6,3%
Known well the partner	5,1%	8,0%	6,3%	1,8%
Did not think about it	–	–	1,3%	1,8%
Just have one partner	–	–	10,1%	1,8%
Other reasons	0%	9,0%	3,8%	1,8%
Not applicable	73,4%	61,6%	60,8%	75,0%

Among the reasons given by the adolescents about condom use in the first sex intercourse, 48.4% made use to prevent pregnancy and 22.2% to avoid STDs, followed by a percentage not too significant, do not have sexual intercourse without a condom, do not meet the partner and other reasons. As regards the last sex intercourse, it is observed that 45.3% used to prevent pregnancy and 27.6% to avoid STDs.

In the use of condoms to prevent pregnancy in the first and last sexual intercourse, it is observed that only 20.1% continued to use for the same reason. Among those who used it to avoid STDs, in the first and last intercourse, 50% remained the same behavior. Of the 22.2% who used condom at the first intercourse, but not used it in the last sexual intercourse, claimed as a main reason the unpredictability of the moment, which is also claimed by those 50% who did not use a condom on the first and last intercourse.

When comparing the use of condoms or not, in the first and last sexual intercourse, it is observed that 50% of those who did not use it the first, changed their mind and used it in the last sexual intercourse. According to the research, the frequency of condom use was reported as follows, 56.0% always used it, 28.8% sometimes, 14.1% never used it and 1.0% not applicable. When asked if they maintain sexual intercourse even dating, 29.3% answered "no", however this percentage if confronted by gender, we note a disparity, 53.2% female while only 12.5% male claims that does not maintain sexual intercourse regardless of a dating relationship. With regard to the number of sexual partners in the past six months, the average was 1.83.

Sexual initiation is an event that often occurs during adolescence and increasingly in earlier ages. The data show that in the group studied, most of them began sexual life, showing an average age of beginning of 14.7 years old. Similar result in research conducted in Brazil indicate that the average age of sexual initiation of Brazilians is around 15 years old, being 14.7 years old for male and 15.3 for female.<sup>8-9</sup>

Human beings are previously in a given cultural system, so the subject, being a historic-cultural human being with social interrelations, exercises social roles and human institutions candied through rules that are initially acquired habits.<sup>11</sup> It is observed this characteristic of human beings clearly in their choice of a partner in first sexual intercourse, although there is a change of normative values for years perpetuated in their society, the asymmetries between men and women still persist, in this way women continue choosing their first partner as one in which there is an affective involvement different of men, in which the first intercourse happens mostly with occasional partners as "casual date".<sup>2,9,11</sup>

In this study, the findings were similar, the type of partner chosen for the first intercourse, being mostly casual for men, 50.9% began their sex life with friends and 8.9% with just known people, while for females, the preference was for a stable partner, 70.9% had their first intercourse with their boyfriend.

In the knowledge about methods to prevent STD/Aids, both in the first and in last sexual intercourse, there is a positive result, since 92.1% declared to have knowledge on the first sexual experience and 99.5% on the last one. So it was hoped that with knowledge the

use of methods to prevent STD/Aids was consistent in all sexual intercourses, though having knowledge is not necessarily mean safe sexual behavior.<sup>7</sup>

Being the condom the most effective method to decrease the risk of transmission/contraction of STD/AIDS, it is believed that with knowledge, condom use in male, for being of easier access is frequent practice during sex of the participants. However, the result of this study presents an difference with other research<sup>2,7,12</sup> and there is a contradiction between the knowledge and the practice. It was noted then, that only 65.4% of respondents used the latex male condom at the first intercourse. Among the reasons cited by respondents of both genders to not use a condom at the first intercourse is the unpredictability of the moment, being most evident in males (25.9%), legitimizing the affirmation that the first sexual intercourse of male adolescents is casual. For them to have the first sexual intercourse is an indispensable action to prove their manhood in front of society, not necessarily having a planning.

If compared with the last intercourse, it is also not used due to the lack of planning of the situation, being that the percentage for female has not changed (13.9%), while the males there is a decline to 11.6% claiming they do not expect to have sexual intercourse, while the reason for disliking its use increased from 3.6% to 6.3%. Besides the adolescents also claim as a reason not to use a condom, in function of a monogamous situation, i.e. they have only one partner, although in minor percentage.<sup>13</sup>

It is worth noting the large number of adolescents claiming the no condom use in the government programs with the free distribution of male condoms. However, it is noted that the strategy does not guarantee that adolescents have easy access, since the access to condoms in the health service means assume to society its subject condition sexually active, culturally undesirable attitude, particularly for female.<sup>3</sup> Another reason highlighted is not using condom to know the partner, attitude of extreme vulnerability.

In those who use the condom in sexual intercourse, it was hoped that its use was primarily to avoid STDs, since the adolescents of today have grown up in the advent of aids, but its use is related to prevention of pregnancy, both in the first and the last sexual intercourse, a result similar to other studies carried out in the country.<sup>11-14</sup>

With regard to positive attitudes concerning the practice of safe sex, condom use in sexual initiation increases the possibility of use it in the last intercourse. In this sense, young people who use condom in initiation, tend to keep this practice in subsequent relations, emphasizing, therefore the importance of early and continuous guidance to stimulate the use of the condom.<sup>1-5</sup>

It is agreed that the issues involving sexuality in adolescence are expressively marked by gender relations, they show differentiated behaviors. Condom use is based on a number of factors pointing to the need to discuss and clarify issues that benefit the reflection and the ressignification of the information, and especially of adolescents' attitudes with regard to the practice of safe sex.



## CONCLUSION

It was noted that the participants of this study claimed sexual initiation in age similar to the national average observed in other studies and that there is a huge difference in the type of partner in relation to gender. On the other hand, women tend to start their sexual life with the partner with whom maintains an affective relationship, most of the time, boyfriend. on the other hand, men have their first sexual intercourse especially with possible partners, which suggests a not scheduled moment, contributing to not always take steps to prevent STD/AIDS and pregnancy.

Adolescents claim to know the means of maintaining a sexual relationship safe, however such knowledge has not placed as in a group less vulnerable to contracting an STD, conversely their behavior has placed in a situation of extreme vulnerability to risk sexual behavior, particularly for males that binds its use to a pregnancy than an STD.

The results invigorate the need for work together between health and education that focuses on the youth leadership to change attitudes, to achieve healthy sexual behavior. It must be considered the gender differences, very present in the speeches, on future educational campaigns on prevention of STDs/AIDS. Thus, it is recognized the need for further studies in the field of adolescence and the male condom use.

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Received on: 13/01/2014  
Required for review: No  
Approved on: 03/09/2014  
Published on: 01/01/2015

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